



# NSPS Newsletter

AF National Security Personnel System Office  
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## Current Status

### National Security Personnel System (NSPS) Presses Toward Implementation

The new Department of Homeland Security personnel system has been delayed and you may be wondering if this delay will affect NSPS. At this time, the Department of Defense has indicated that it *"plans to continue to go forward with finalizing our regulations and our plans to implement NSPS later this year."*

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## NSPS Timeline

### NSPS Projected Schedule

The current NSPS timeline calls for Congressional notification and publication of the final enabling regulations in the Federal Register by early fall. Thirty days after this notification / publication, the provisions of the enabling NSPS regulation may be put into effect. The Department of Defense (DoD) may begin its phased implementation of NSPS at this time.

The *Labor Relations* portion of the new system will be the first to be implemented. It is scheduled to be deployed across the Department of Defense in the fall and will cover all bargaining unit employees.

The remaining provisions will be phased in incrementally by spiral. Performance Management, which requires supervisors to work with employees to establish performance goals and expectations that are aligned with mission-related goals and the Human Resources elements, which include pay banding and the Appeals System, are scheduled to be added in early calendar year 2006 after any General Pay Increase.

The first group of Air Force installations to implement NSPS includes elements of AF Pentagon, Eglin AFB (FL), Ellsworth AFB (SD), Lackland AFB (TX), March ARB (CA), McConnell AFB (KS), Moody AFB (GA), Patrick AFB (FL), and Tinker AFB (OK).

The first performance-based payout under NSPS is scheduled for January 2007.

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## **NSPS in AU-24, Concepts for AF Leadership**

Mr. Roger Blanchard, Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel, recently published an article on how civilian personnel is adapting to the demands of the new Air Force. This document, which includes the following section on NSPS, will be included in the material provided to students at the Ira C. Eaker College for Professional Development at Maxwell AFB.

*As the AF undergoes these changes, the largest change in civilian personnel in the last quarter century is also being implemented with the DoD's introduction of the NSPS. NSPS is an ambitious reshaping of the old rules governing civilian employee management. It changes how employees are recruited, developed, deployed, and retained. It builds on a new performance management system that values performance, rewards contribution, and promotes excellence. It requires that supervisors manage with innovation to achieve tangible results and that civilians adapt rapidly to new missions, new technology, and new tactics.*

*NSPS challenges civilian and military managers and supervisors, as well as employees, to work smarter and more creatively and to accept responsibility for the success of each organizational undertaking. The result of the challenge met is a partnership focused on solving problems, producing results, and advancing the mission; it is civilian employees working with uniformed personnel as members of an agile, high-performing defense force.*

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## **NSPS Training**

All employees are scheduled to receive training prior to conversion to NSPS; this training consists of opportunities to help employees migrate successfully to the new system.

To help with the transition, four core competencies have been identified as being essential for successful NSPS implementation. These are 1) the ability to deal with change, 2) skill in interpersonal communications, 3) the ability to coach and counsel employees and 4) the ability to achieve results through performance and/or manage employee performance. Many employees have already taken classes that help develop these skills; if not, several web-based courses are available via the AF Portal (see below for more information). Employees are encouraged to work with their installation training OPR to take one or more of these classes.

DoD is developing several courses that deal specifically with the changes introduced by NSPS; these courses are scheduled to be provided to employees prior to deployment of NSPS. Training will cover the Performance Management system and changes to the personnel system.

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## Accessing Web Training

### Courses available on the AF Portal

1. Log into the AF portal. (You must have a log-in / password)
2. Ensure you are on the AF Home tab.
3. From the “Top Viewed Items” area, select “IT E-Learning”
4. You may be asked to create an account if you have never used SkillSoft. The SkillPort page will appear.
5. Use the Search box to search for any courses you are interested in.

**NOTE:** Additional instructions on accessing web-based courses, along with course summaries, will be posted to the AF NSPS website in September.

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## Getting to Know NSPS: Pay Banding

One of the key features of NSPS is the change it brings to classification. Under NSPS proposals, the General Schedule’s (GS) 22 occupational groups, or series, will be consolidated into a smaller number of *career groups* that combine similar type of work. For example, the medical career group might include physicians, dentists, dieticians, and nurses as well as the various technicians that support them; an engineering career group could include all the professional engineering occupations as well as the engineering technical staff.

Reflecting the different occupations, each career group may have several *pay schedules* associated with it. For example, the engineering career group might have three separate pay schedules, including a professional pay schedule covering all the professional engineers, a second pay schedule for the technicians, and a third one for supervisors.

Within these pay schedules, each employee will be placed in a *pay band*. Under the GS pay schedule, occupational groups are divided into 15 grade levels (GS 1 –15); each grade level is further divided into ten ‘steps’. Employees in each grade level progress through the steps based on the passage of time. Under NSPS, the 15 grade levels will be consolidated into several (probably three or four) broader pay bands that will have a wider range of pay than the GS grades but not have pay steps. Employees will move through each pay band based on their performance. Employee who are promoted will move to the next higher pay band.

Pay bands will be adjusted over time to reflect market pay trends and, ultimately, to allow the Department of Defense to offer more competitive salaries, allowing it to attract high performers to the workforce at the same time it is retaining and improving the skills of the existing workers.

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